

MINUTES

JOINT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN'S ISSUES

September 14-15, 2005
Room 313-S—Statehouse

Members Present

Representative Willa DeCastro, Chairperson
Senator Kay O'Connor, Vice Chairperson
Senator Laura Kelly
Senator David Haley
Senator Roger Reitz
Senator Susan Wagle
Representative Marti Crow
Representative Bonnie Huy
Representative Frank Miller
Representative Sue Storm

Staff Present

Susan Kannarr, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Robert Waller, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Amy VanHouse, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Mike Corrigan, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Helen Pedigo, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Florence Deeter, Committee Secretary

Conferees

Jill Shelley, Legislative Division of Post Audit
Candy Shively, Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
Roberta Sue McKenna, Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
Sandra Dixon, Kansas Children's Service League
Shawn Kane, American Adoptions
Scott Mars, American Adoptions
Michael Belfonte, Adoption Attorney
Kent Vincent, Adoption Attorney
Brent Cain, His Kids Adoptions International
Jane Gockel, Catholic Charities
Bob Beatty, Adoptive Parent
Ruth Porisch, Adoption with Wisdom and Honesty
Jim Redmon, Kansas Children's Cabinet
Melissa Ness, Kansas Children's Cabinet
Bobbi Mariani, Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
Alice Womack, Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services

Leadell Ediger, Kansas Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
Peggy Bailey, Child Care Providers Coalition
Lynne Owens, Department of Education
Gayle Stuber, Department of Education
Mary Magathan, Kid-Screen, Inc.
Kyle Kessler, Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
Deann Dinkel, Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services
Dr. Pam Shaw, Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Monica Murnan, Family Resource Center
Mary Baskett, Kansas Headstart Association
Elaine Edwards, Kansas Association for the Education of Young Children
David Wiebe, Johnson County Mental Health Center
Helen Imel, Therapeutic Preschools Program Director
Nancy Keel, Parents As Teachers
Linda Kenney, Department of Health and Environment Programs
Rose Howlett, Wyandotte County Health Department
Debbie Mai, Rainbows United
Carolee Jones, Child Abuse Prevention Services, Inc.
Cindy D'Ercole, Kansas Action for Children

Others Attending

See attached list.

Wednesday, September 14 Morning Session

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m., welcoming the Committee and guests and asking participants to introduce themselves. Committee members were instructed that documents answering questions from the August meeting were available at their places (Attachments 1, 2, and 3).

Helen Pedigo, Revisor of Statutes Office, reviewed the Kansas Adoption Statutes and presented a table which compared Kansas adoption laws to those of surrounding states (Attachment 4). Ms. Pedigo noted that the adoption and relinquishment act was originally introduced in 1989 and passed by the Legislature in 1990.

In answer to questions from the Committee regarding advertising or payment for adoption consideration, Ms. Pedigo stated that such advertising or payment is strictly prohibited except for child agencies, and only certified adoption agencies may advertise publicly. The Committee discussed with Ms. Pedigo and representatives from American Adoptions, what happens in the case of a father who does not know about the birth and is thus not aware of an upcoming hearing. The discussion indicated that this is a weak spot in the Kansas laws and that some states use birth father registries to serve as notice to the potential father or as a place to check when notice is given. Committee members discussed the fact that Kansas has considered, but not adopted legislation, that would create such a registry. Responding to further questions, Ms. Pedigo indicated that once the court has approved an adoption, the birth mother cannot revoke her decision, unless it is determined that she did not knowingly and voluntarily give consent, but that under any circumstances the

maximum time is a year. In response to questions about whether Kansas is a preferred state in which to adopt, representatives of American Adoptions said that Kansas may be preferred by many people for adoption because of the quick finalization time.

Post Audit Report on Adoption

Jill Shelley of the Legislative Division of Post Audit presented the February 2005 Performance Audit Report, "Foster Care: Determining Whether Adoptions Are Being Finalized as Quickly as Possible, Once an Adoptive Family is Located" (Attachment 5).

In answer to Committee questions regarding special needs children, Ms. Shelley acknowledged the Federal government provides subsidies for children in the public system, and that state and federal tax credits are available to parents adopting through private agencies. Ms. Shelley also described the impact of the new adoption contracts and noted that the new contracts should eliminate many of the incentives for delay. Candy Shively, Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, stated that the maximum subsidy is normally \$400 per month, but it could be higher if there were unusually high needs. Subsidies are normally between \$200 - \$400 per month. In response to further questions, Ms. Shively stated that family income is not considered in determining the amount of subsidy, instead the subsidy amount is based on needs of the child, and not all adoptive parents receive adoption subsidies. The Committee briefly discussed the issue of grandparents serving as foster parents for their grandchildren. Ms. Shively commented on SB 62 which was discussed during the 2005 Session. Representative Huy indicated that the bill is currently in the House Federal and State Affairs Committee and that she has received a commitment from the Chairperson that the bill will receive a hearing in January. In response to further questions, Ms. Shively indicated there are approximately 1,000 children in the state awaiting adoption and the length of time for processing those adoptions is about 38 months. Other topics of discussion by the Committee included the federal bias to out-of-home placements in the IV-E funding, constituent concerns that people become foster parents for infants only to adopt and that once the adoption takes place they are no longer foster parents, leading some to believe that children are being taken from homes so that they can be adopted by others, and the issue that older children tend to take longer to adopt and are heavily represented in the children who are awaiting adoption.

The Committee also asked questions regarding what happens with the reunification contractor payments when reunifications fail and the child returns to foster care. Ms. Shively responded that if the child is returned within 12 months, the contractor takes over where it left off. If the child returns after 12 months, the payments start over at the highest payments.

Afternoon Session

The Chairperson outlined the afternoon session, requesting that the presentations be given from each agency before the discussion and question time of the Committee.

Kansas Children's Service League

Sandra Dixon, Chief Operations Officer, Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL), reviewed her testimony which gave information on the background of the agency's involvement in the adoption process for the State; adoption practice expectations; recruitment activities; adoptive family preparation; adoptive family selection; adoptive family service plans; post placement services for

adoptive families; a flowchart of KCSL adoption services, and a chart showing primary responsibilities of the foster care/reintegration and adoption contractors ([Attachment 6](#)).

American Adoptions

Shawn Kane, Assistant Executive Director, American Adoptions, presented testimony that included a description of the services his agency provides and the clients it serves; reasons why an adoptive family or pregnant mother might choose his agency; suggested improvements in the adoption system; special considerations when handling special needs adoptions; and common or potential complications during and after adoptions and ways to avoid the problems ([Attachment 7](#)). Also included in the packet of materials distributed was a paper from the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute on the interstate compact on the placement of children and a sample of the home study packet sent to adoptive parents by American Adoptions.

In his comments, Mr. Kane noted that American Adoptions is a not-for-profit corporation dealing primarily with infant adoptions across the United States. Mr. Kane emphasized the importance of the internet in the adoption process and noted that 50-60 percent of pregnant mothers voluntarily choose American Adoptions for placement of their children by using the internet. At American Adoptions, birth mothers have the option of creating their own adoption plan and may choose the adoptive family. About 80 percent of prospective parents also use the internet for inquiry. Due to their national presence, American Adoptions works with Kansas families who want to adopt out-of-state infants by providing the families with information to meet all of the national requirements. Finally, Mr. Kane commented that Kansas has great adoption laws already but that it could be even more of a leader and model in the nation with some changes.

Private Adoption Attorney

Kent Vincent, a private adoption attorney in Topeka, presented testimony that included several suggestions for improving the adoption laws of Kansas and a case history that illustrated the need for one of the suggested changes to the interstate compact ([Attachment 8](#)). During his comments, Mr. Vincent noted that in general, Kansas adoption laws are very good. Mr. Vincent noted that in developing the suggested changes included in his testimony, he worked with the National Association of Adoption Attorneys to collect input from other adoption attorneys. Finally, Mr. Vincent commented that the adoption bar would be willing to discuss improvements with this Committee or with the Legislature.

His Kids Adoptions International

Brent Cain, Director of Placement services for HIS KIDS Adoptions International, addressed the Committee with information pertinent to international adoptions. Mr. Cain distributed information that included the packet of information sent to potential adoptive parents with information about the requirements for adoption in a variety of foreign countries ([Attachment 9](#)). Mr. Cain explained that HIS KIDS is a 501 (c) 3, not-for-profit private child-licensed placement agency that works with many countries. Currently, China is the country most favored for adoption. Mr. Cain noted that the process of international adoption is long and arduous and that adoptive families must comply with requirements of Kansas statutes and regulations, the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigrations Services, and the placing country. He further noted that international adoptions are generally more expensive than domestic adoptions. Mr. Cain distributed and explained a document on the tax benefits available for the expenses of adopting a child ([Attachment 10](#)). Kansas allows up to 25 percent of what the Federal government offers. In addition, Mr. Cain stated there are grants available

for adoptions from certain countries. Also distributed was a copy of an article describing the federal Child Citizenship Act of 2000 (HR 2883) which grants citizenship to foreign-born children adopted by American citizens (Attachment 11). When addressing suggested improvements in adoptions, Mr. Cain noted that even though an IR3 Visa is issued to the adopting family verifying citizenship and is sent to the Bureau of Vital Statistics, birth certificates issued to the child contain the statement "This certificate is not evidence of United States citizenship" (Attachment 12). Finally, Mr. Cain addressed the issue of bribes involved in foreign adoptions and commented that the stories are probably over-exaggerated, but that some countries were worse than others and that His Kids advises clients not to participate.

Catholic Charities

Jane Gockel, Catholic Charities, described the organization of her agency and distributed a handout containing the agency criteria for prospective adoptive parents, frequently asked questions, and a statement of beliefs (Attachment 13). Ms. Gockel stated that her agency advocates open adoptions where there is contact between the birth parents and adoptive parents and that due to this open process, additional counseling is given to the birth mother and adoptive parents. Catholic Charities charges fees of \$500 for a home study and \$5,000 for completion of adoption.

Ms. Gockel described the planning process that takes place before the birth to ensure a smooth adoption. She stated that during the planning process, birth parents are asked to project ahead to what their lives will be like down the road if they keep their children or if they give the child up for adoption. Catholic Charities does not begin to put family profiles together until the mother is at least 7 months along and has been through counseling. During the planning process, the birth parent chooses the adoptive parents and meeting arrangements are set up, then they are allowed to determine how much contact they will want. The agency also works with the adoptive parent to prepare them for adoption, including working with them on how to explain adoption to the child.

Ms. Gockel commented that her agency waits longer than the required 12 hours after birth to obtain consent to make sure they understand the finality of the decision and noted that about 20 percent change their mind after delivery.

Ms. Gockel stated that Catholic Charities maintains an open door process after adoptions are final to help both sides with issues that arise. Ms. Gockel further noted that Catholic Charities has a program entitled Search and Reunion where an adopted adult may request information as to who the birth mother/family was in order to acquire pertinent information or medical history, or both.

In her final comments, Ms. Gockel offered a couple of cautions to the Committee regarding adoptions, which included concerns about pregnant women being offered money for having babies; the need for counseling for birth mothers to explain that it is all right to change their minds and help support her after birth; and that hospital staff should stay out of the adoption process, with the example of a doctor in a hospital suggesting to a young pregnant woman that he knows someone who would love to adopt her baby, because this could be perceived as undue influence and the birth mother does not get appropriate counseling

Adoptive Parent

Bob Beatty, an assistant professor of political science at Washburn University, represented himself as an individual involved in an international adoption and distributed a newspaper article he authored describing his adoption of a baby girl from China (Attachment 14). Mr. Beatty commented that in China, generally only girls are available for adoption due to family size restrictions and the preference for male children. He described the parameters for adopting in China, which is very regulated and efficient. Mr. Beatty estimated that the total cost of the adoption process ranges from \$15,000 to \$17,000 and that approximately 12 to 15 months are required for completion of the adoption process. He further noted that Kansas offers a state tax credit and there is a Federal tax credit of \$10,000. Mr. Beatty told the Committee that there are 500,000 to one million orphans in China waiting for adoption, with about 95 percent girls. China is a first-choice country for adoption for several reasons, including the overwhelming need for adoptions, the relative good health of the child, the young age of the children, the structured process, the cost compared to other countries or domestic adoptions, the efficiency and lack of corruption in the system, and the fact that there are no parents available to contest the adoptions which eliminates fears of mothers coming back to take children. Finally, Mr. Beatty knows that, at this time, his daughter will not be considered for President of the United States; however, an amendment to the *U. S. Constitution* could change that and the Kansas Legislature could add this state to other consenting states if Congress gave consideration to that amendment.

Adoption with Wisdom and Honesty

Ruth Porisch, Adoption with Wisdom and Honesty, informed the Committee that her organization is not primarily a child placement agency, but is a system of support developed out of a group of parents in McPherson who bonded together to find the best way of assisting parents of special needs children. Ms. Porisch described her family's experience with adopting a special needs child and noted that special needs are not often well-documented for the adoptive parent. She further noted that when assistance is needed for care, knowledge of where to get information and subsidies for assistance is not always evident to the adoptive parent. Parents and some professionals came together to provide seminars and training to assist the parents who entered into private adoptions.

Round Table Questions and Discussion

In answer to questions regarding how often relatives adopt children, Ms. Dixon (KCSL) did not have a specific number, but indicated that preference is given to adoption by a relative in order to keep a child within his or her family, assuming that the relative is an appropriate placement. Sue McKenna, Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, responded that 63 percent of adoptions are by foster parents, 27 percent are with relatives, and 9 percent are other. Addressing an insurance question, Ms. Dixon noted, a family's insurance provides health coverage first, and if that is not sufficient, then the child's medical card is used. The Chairperson reminded the Committee that much information from SRS was given in their packets earlier today.

Questions of how best to expedite adoptions in Kansas were discussed by Ms. Dixon. She stated that there is a balance between providing sufficient financial support to families to help them become good parents and paying parents to adopt. Finding a way to reduce the length of time for finalization of adoption would help to expedite the adoption process. From the family perspective, having quality medical service in rural areas is of primary concern for adopting families. Dentists are in short supply and present special concern because of an insufficient reimbursement policy for their services.

In explaining home studies, Ms. Dixon stated that while each agency has its own format, there are similar themes overall and some are more cursory than others. The State of Kansas has a very thorough home study process. Comments from various agencies regarding whether home studies make more demands on placement of an adoptive child of the State:

- Mr. Cain stated that all agencies licensed by the State of Kansas are obligated to follow the state's rules and regulations. In particular, KSA 28-4-176(c) delineates what needs to be included in a home study. He stated further that there is as much variation in the home study format as there are social workers; some focus on biographical information, while others focus on the current function of the family.
- Mr. Kane stated there is a variance in quality of home studies because of the emphasis one social worker has as compared to another.
- Mr. Beatty said the home study is very intrusive, but the government of China has a right to know what quality of home a child is going to.
- Ms. Gockel informs the adoptive parents of the intrusiveness of the process, the importance of the detailed report, and no apology is made regarding the finding of pertinent information because they need to ensure the child is placed into an appropriate home.
- Mr. Vincent indicated there are different emphases but similar information. With both inter-state and intra-state adoptions, the procedures and policies must be satisfied for a judge to give full approval.

Questions of open adoptions by either singles or couples were directed to both international and domestic agencies for clarification. For international adoptions, the countries vary in what is allowed. Catholic Charities firmly stated that they adopt to couples only. American Adoptions stated that they only work with couples partially due to the fact that some Crisis Pregnancy Centers that they work with will not work with agencies that do non-couple adoptions. Ms. Dixon stated that final decisions are made by a team of people whose goal is to find the best placement for the child without regard to marital status.

Ms. Dixon spoke to the question of special needs children being adopted outside the state of Kansas and indicated that KCSL is affiliated with the National Adoptive Kids Project. All children profiled on the KCSL website also are profiled on the national website, www.adoptuskids.org. There are links on the website to find specific information on children to be adopted. Mr. Kane noted, however, that making people go through links decreases the number that will get to the information on the children, and suggested that the search process needs to be simplified for the internet user. Mr. Kane, further suggested that KCSL consider posting the information on their children on other agencies websites, and not just post links.

Ms. Shively responded to the question of shifting resources provided by the federal and state government systems to assist families at the beginning of the adoptive process, saying it would be better to have those initiatives in place to speed up the process of adoption or reintegration.

**Morning Session
Thursday, September 15**

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., explained the meeting format, and requested introductions of participants and Committee members.

Susan Kannarr, Legislative Research Department, presented a history of the tobacco money use in Kansas (Attachment 15). In answer to questions from the Committee, Ms. Kannarr stated that management of Kansas Endowment for Youth (KEY) Funds under KPERS is a holding place for funds rather than an account used for investments. Concerning the question of a tax increase on tobacco products, Ms. Kannarr will obtain the information for the Committee at a later date.

Jim Redmon, Kansas Children's Cabinet, provided handouts including a description of the purpose of the children's cabinet; converging early childhood initiatives; Smart Start Goals and map; Smart Start grantees, Community Based Child Abuse Prevention grantees; and a school readiness brochure (Attachment 16). Mr. Redmon presented oral testimony on the background of the Children's Cabinet, the science foundation for early childhood services, school readiness, the Kansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems plan, and a description of Smart Start. He asked the Committee to look at the brochure to see the goals for school readiness. Mr. Redmon commented that evaluation has been on-going, beginning in 2000, with completion expected in 2006, and noted that at that time they will have a better picture of the outcomes of Smart Start and can determine whether or not the original goals have been met.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding outcomes, Mr. Redmon stated that children across the state are divided into Cohort I and Cohort II and are tracked on the school readiness indicators. Comparison is made between the cohorts; one group is educated by Smart Start, the other is not. Children are identified for services based on the grants available to the agency. He further stated that three applications for grants were not funded in some counties; upon re-application, depending on the level of funding, a plan for the second group will be in place for one-year grants. Regarding the turnover rate in Smart Start centers, Ms. Jones answered that before the Smart Start initiative in 2001, the turnover rate in 1999 was 134 percent; in Saline County the rate has decreased to 28 percent. She noted that the improvement is very likely due to training and enhancement of wage benefits. Mr. Redmon will provide data to the Committee at a later date regarding the gaps in services.

Mr. Redmon reviewed for the Committee the list of indicators used in counties that did well related to overall school readiness. He agreed with the Committee member that further community coordination would enhance the preparation of the early childhood population for school readiness.

When asked about the involvement of fathers in early childhood education, Gayle Stuber stated that, to date, research is based on the mother's involvement in the early education process. Research is only beginning to look at the influence of the father figure in this arena.

Mr. Redmon was asked to provide for the Committee the number of persons targeted for services in the Topeka area under Smart Start.

Mr. Redmon responded to the question of goals and improvement of programs to meet the goals, by stating that a goal of 80-90 percent achievement is expected; an on-going process of looking at the under-achiever, with the intent of adjusting the program to meet those goals, is of prime consideration. Comparison of outcomes is somewhat flawed because each community uses the Smart Start monies as best suits the needs of the community. As a point of clarification, Melissa Ness commented that Smart Start was chosen for the Children's Cabinet as an over-arching entity that allows flexibility in the use of funds within the community programs.

In answer to how effective the early childhood preparation remains in K-12, Cindy D'Ercole explained that there is direct correlation at the fourth grade level in student test results compared to

the scores at the Kindergarten level. Research shows that children who start behind in grade level, stay behind. The most cost effective way to close the achievement gap is to close the preparation gap.

Child Care Assistance Program, SRS

Bobbi Mariani brought a copy of testimony given at the August meeting of the Committee (Attachment 17). Ms. Mariani directed the attention of the Committee to a page of statistics asked for at the previous meeting. SRS is involved closely with partners who are providing programs for school readiness for children and the agency works to be aware of where those monies are spent.

Kansas Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies

Leadell Ediger, Kansas Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies (KACCRRRA), invited the Committee to look at a brochure explaining KACCRRRA (Attachment 18), and a one-page summary released by the Metropolitan Council on Early Learning giving preliminary findings on program performance (Attachment 19). A key component of KACCRRRA is the implementation of a salary supplement program through the Kaufman Foundation. Turnover rate has been reduced to 22 percent among the 550 recipients in this program.

Child Care Providers Coalition

Peggy Bailey, Child Care Providers Coalition, explained that the goal of the organization is to look for quality care of children in Kansas and provided a handout that described the licensing process, the Child Care Assistance Program, Early Head Start contracts, and provided information on initiatives or processes to increase the professionalism in the child care field to increase quality (Attachment 20). In addition, the handout listed current weaknesses in the child care system and suggested improvements.

Ms. Bailey answered the question of cost per week of caring for an infant or toddler by stating that there are wide variances in the community. The usual range is about \$130-\$150 per week. SRS children are included and the care provider is paid \$2.50 per hour for infant care. She commented that SRS pays an hourly wage, rather than a weekly rate, which is more common.

Ms. Bailey addressed the Committee's question regarding accreditation to say that a subsidy is provided for family accreditation in some areas of Kansas. Ms. Ediger provided further information by stating that KACCRRRA received a grant from SRS of \$500,000 per year to provide grants for family child care. The maximum grant was \$1,500, provided by Family Child Care Provider Grants.

The Committee's questions on the Head Start Program were addressed by Ms. Beckett, who stated that the cooperation among various providers is very high, providing training for child care staff and enhancements to environment in order for standards to be met. When the Head Start Program was begun in 1998, one of the goals was to work with the child care partnerships already in existence.

One problem of concern to the Committee is in the area of training and credentials for child care providers. Ms. Ediger stated that the closest thing to a system of training is through various agencies who provide classes of instruction. In addition, the T.E.A.C.H. program leads to an associate degree in early childhood; however, because of inadequate funding, there are people on the waiting list for education. The competitive environment is a deterrent to recruitment. Mr. Redmon

responded to a further question from the Committee regarding use of monies in the Children's Cabinet for credentialing by stating that the Cabinet is very supportive of the T.E.A.C.H. and Wages programs, which provide informational workshops to enable agencies to acquire the grants. Various responses were given in answer to whether early childhood education classes were being conducted at the high school level, in vocational-technical training, and at the Regents level. Ms. Bailey noted that vocational-technical schools do have early childhood classes, and Ms. Stuber noted that both Johnson County vocational-technical and high schools have classes.

Department of Education Programs

Lynne Owens, Kansas State Department of Education, presented information to the Committee on the Parents as Teachers (PAT), and Four-Year-Old At-Risk programs ([Attachment 21](#)). Ms. Owens commented that Kansas has not had funds to do an evaluation of the programs, instead, a National Parents as Teachers evaluation is conducted. She further commented that Kansas relies on trained consultants to assist the Department of Education in knowing the quality of the programs and determining whether the children reach the national goals. Partnerships are formed with Early Head Start, Healthy Start, and Tiny-K programs. Committee members were asked to view for data and information the brochures, Parents as Teachers Evaluations and Parents as Teachers Logic Model.

Ms. Owens addressed the Committee's questions about Parents as Teachers by responding that children needing services are found by media blitz and some door-to-door contact; that developmental screening is done as early as 6 months, and that applications from 70 or so school districts have been turned down because of lack of funds. Ms. Owens further noted that a gap in services is evident because three-year-old children are not served in this program; 82 percent of parent educators providing services have college degrees; there are no eligibility requirements for persons receiving services; local school districts decide the length of time services are provided; health screening is conducted by trained parent educators to look for unusual levels of hearing, under-developed motor skills and intellectual skills; parents are not required to pay for means testing for developmental skills, although some families voluntarily contribute money to foundations to cover costs for low-income families; and a study done in Missouri found that high needs children who had pre-school experience or attended PAT programs, or both scored above their peers when evaluated at the third grade level.

In response to questions about the Four-Year-Old At Risk program, Ms. Owens clarified for the Committee that those working in this program must be certified elementary teachers, and 52 percent have early childhood certification. School districts advertise eligibility and send information to families of four-year-olds; a child cannot be served in the At-Risk program if he/she currently is enrolled in Head Start. Ms. Owens confirmed that enrollment in the program is entirely voluntary.

Kid-Screen, L.C.

Mary Magathan, an independent nurse practitioner representing Kid-Screen, presented information on the background of Kid-Screen, considerations in long-term care planning for children with disabilities, home-based versus institutional services, and educational/vocational or higher education services ([Attachments 22 and 23](#)). In her comments, Ms. Magathan commented that the model of home-based services, as opposed to institutional services, is being given more preference. She further noted that when private insurance and Medicaid are no longer available to assist with payment of medical needs, charitable organizations are contacted to help provide personal needs. Community support services and the technology of various agencies will increase the effectiveness of services to children in Kid-Screen.

In response to a question about why the state would want to count only the child's income and not the parent's income when determining eligibility for waiver services, Ms. Magathan emphasized the expensive nature of these kids and the benefit of allowing parents to continue to work instead of having to quit work to care for their child and the relative value of their income taxes.

Working Lunch Meeting

The Chairperson presented background information on a program created to provide tuition waivers and financial support for foster care children to attend post-secondary schools. The Chairperson stated that it has come to her attention that some Regents schools no longer accept these students, and requested that SRS provide some options to facilitate changes.

Kyle Kessler, Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS), referred to HB 2795 enacted by the Legislature in 2002. The program was intended to cover tuition/fees through Regents institutions and Washburn with no requirement for the youth to receive any other services from SRS to qualify for the waiver. Mr. Kessler noted that the sunset date is June 30, 2006.

Deann Dinkel of SRS covered information regarding the tuition waiver program in Kansas. Federal funds called Education Training Vouchers (ETV) provide up to \$6,250 per year for a variety of costs associated with all post-secondary education, not just Regents schools. In addition, federal Chafee Funds were available to fund the tuition waiver at Regents schools (80 percent federal funds, 20 percent state match paid by the schools). Prior to July 1, 2005, students were allowed to receive a tuition waiver, as well as up to \$6,250 per year from ETV for expenses. New Federal policy, effective July 1, 2005, requires SRS to pay all post-secondary education out of ETV funds and are prohibited from using Chafee Funds for this purpose. This means that youth can only receive a maximum of \$6,250 per year to cover tuition and living expenses. This has made the program difficult to administer and limited funds to support the foster care children during their education. Currently, Regents schools do not provide a tuition waiver, but instead wait to receive funding from the Board of Regents, and will then release other possible grant funds to the student. The agency is requesting that the Board of Regents provide a true tuition waiver where tuition and fees are waived by the educational institutions instead of getting reimbursed with Chafee Funds to allow eligible youth to spend the ETV dollars on other education-related expenses. Mr. Kessler indicated to the Committee that SRS would include this issue in the legislative package they will propose in 2006, if that was the Committee's preference.

The following facts were given in response to questions from the Committee:

- Foster kids who age out of the program and choose to enter a Regents school will receive a tuition waiver and could still use the ETV funds as needed; this will benefit approximately 150 students who have aged out of the program.
- Length of time for completing college is 8 semesters, or through the semester the student turns 21, while military tuition waivers allow 10 semesters for completing college hours.
- Federal Chafee Funds are paid to the State of Kansas, and SRS administers those funds.
- The program requires students to work from 10-20 hours per week.
- Students are encouraged to fill out applications for Pell grants, and money received from those grants is subtracted from the ETV funds.

The Chairperson asked the Committee for their opinions on this issue; consensus was to have SRS prepare this legislation for presentation for the 2006 Legislature.

A motion was made by Senator O'Connor and seconded by Senator Kelly to approve the minutes of the August 10 and 11, 2005 meeting. The motion passed and the minutes were approved.

The Chairperson explained that the Committee had been asked to be a representative on the Family-Centered Systems of Care steering committee. This initiative's mission is to keep kids in the home rather than moving them into foster care. At the present time, it is a grant program; future plans are to develop a system which is not grant-dependent. Senator Kelly attended in place of Chairperson DeCastro and presented her thoughts on the meeting.

The Chairperson asked the Committee to discuss items to be considered for the report to the Legislature in 2006. The following items were suggested by Committee members:

- Draft a resolution to the Federal government asking for clarification of the funding requirements available for foster care, and make more of those funds available for home preservation.
- Ask SRS to work at increasing placements with relatives so as to increase the number of placements above the present 22 percent; monitoring to be done for two years.
- Policy changes within an agency need to be communicated to all other agencies involved in child placement.
- Encourage agencies to work on identifying the barriers to family recruitment.
- Possible legislation permitting judges to set a continuation date if more time is needed and progress is being made in various cases.
- Give consideration to release of assets in parent's estates to provide additional income to children who age out of the system; use of a trust fund may be a possibility. An in-depth look at the pros and cons of this issue is requested.

The Committee meeting was recessed for a break and then reconvened at 1:45 p.m. for further discussion of state funded programs serving children from birth to five.

American Pediatric Association

Dr. Pam Shaw, Kansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, addressed the Committee with information about the issue of immunization. In 1993, a federal program called Vaccines for Children (VFC), which provides vaccines for eligible, low-income children, was implemented in Kansas. Dr. Shaw noted that, unfortunately, the number of providers for the program has not increased significantly since that time. Vaccines are primarily for low-income, Medicaid, and non-insurance carrying families, and approximately 44 percent of those children do receive vaccines through the program. Dr. Shaw stated that she believes providers need to be more aware of a child's need for vaccines to be obtained from their primary physician.

Dr. Shaw described barriers for VFC providers including: the cost of vaccines; the cost of keeping VFC vaccines in separate refrigeration; the cost of administering the vaccine; and the transient nature of the participating population. Also important is having a valid data system of registry so that reminders can be sent to parents in order to keep a child on schedule. One solution to consider would be to have a universal system of immunization provided entirely by the State so that every child within the state would have all their immunizations at the designated time.

Dr. Shaw gave the following information in response to Committee questions:

- The recommended vaccination schedule is at 2, 4, and 6 months; again at 12 months and, if necessary, at 15 months. Vaccination before entering Kindergarten and again at 11 years for the Pertussis and Tetanus booster.
- The Academy is working on a program to elicit responses from VFC providers to determine why there are not more providers.

Family Resource Center

Monica Murnan, working with Smart Start in Southeast Kansas, reported that Smart Start is not a program or project, it is an infrastructure designed to allow communities the opportunity to assess programs pertinent to the population. Smart Start provides information for access to quality health care for children, access to needed programs, and helps with determining affordability.

In her area, early childhood providers have been rewarded with an increase in salary for time on the job and increase of education. A yearly salary of \$14,000 has stabilized the turnover rate at 10 percent.

Head Start

Mary Baskett, Kansas Headstart Association, provided information to the Committee about Kansas Early Headstart (KEHS) programs ([Attachment 24](#)). Ms. Baskett noted that outcome reporting has been in place for the past five years for rates of immunization, percentage of pregnant women receiving early prenatal care, and the percentage of children demonstrating growth skills. The written testimony included needs and opportunities of the Early Head Start program.

Ms. Baskett provided the following information in response to questions:

- Some monies from the Federal government are co-mingled with the State in order to provide child care for low-income families who return to work.
- The State has outcomes in place that are not required by the Federal programs.
- State assessments are done and show that upwards of 10 percent of special needs kids are receiving services as required by federal law.
- Sixty-five percent of income eligible 3-5 year-old children are being served; additional numbers of children in low-income families could be served if more funds were provided.
- KEHS provides services to children in the home with intensive 60-90 minute visits. Additional services can be provided in community centers.
- Funding for KEHS is \$7.8 million in Federal funds per year; allocation is through Child Care Development Funds; no money comes from the State General Fund.
- Being a U. S. citizen is not a requirement for services and a migrant Head Start program is in place in Kansas.

- One of the requirements for Early Head Start is that parents also do not receive the state child care subsidy.

Kansas Association for the Education of Young Children

Elaine Edwards, Executive Director of Child Care in Salina and also representing the Kansas Association for the Education of Young Children (KAEYC), provided information to the Committee outlining the vision, mission, values, and goals of the organization ([Attachment 25](#)). KAEYC is a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and has 1,100 members in Kansas. At present, 350 kindergarten teachers have joined the association and KAEYC is working to improve professionals in the field. Ms. Edwards noted that KAEYC works in close partnership with all other agencies to use funds wisely and not duplicate services. Local United Way dollars are used in some communities to benefit families whose income does not allow them to qualify for Head Start services.

Therapeutic Services for Preschoolers

Steve Erickson, SRS, brought information to the Committee on the Therapeutic Services for Preschoolers Program (TSP) which operates in conjunction with the University of Kansas to target at-risk preschool children who may need mental health services ([Attachment 26](#)).

Johnson County Mental Health Center

Helen Imel provided information to the Committee about the Step Ahead program at the Johnson County Mental Health Center which provides therapeutic preschool services to children aged three to five ([Attachment 27](#)).

Parents As Teachers

Nancy Keel, Program Director for the Kansas City Area Parents as Teachers Consortium, presented background and program information to the Committee about Parents as Teachers ([Attachment 28](#)).

Programs at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Linda Kenney, Department of Health and Environment, presented information to the Committee on the Maternal and Infant Health program, Healthy Start Home Visitors, Newborn Hearing Screening, Immunizations, Infant and Toddler Services, and Children with Special Health Care Needs. A program overview and profile of the individual services was distributed to the Committee ([Attachment 29](#)).

In response to questions, Ms. Kenney provided the following information:

- Children with special needs who are applying for services are required to apply for Medicaid and Title XXI.

- The Governor has put in place a task force relating to private providers for the purpose of raising immunization levels in Kansas.
- Putting case managers in WIC clinics may help in locating children in need of immunizations.
- Some counties have an immunization registry in place to assist in keeping parents advised of time of immunizations. This system is being implemented statewide.

Wyandotte County Health Department

Rosie Howlett, Unified Government Public Health Department, presented information to the Committee pertaining to Wyandotte County ([Attachment 30](#)). Ms. Howlett noted that Wyandotte County struggles with high unemployment, a disproportionate number of non-citizens who do not qualify for assistance, and uninsured and under-insured families. Direct services offered for the age group 0-5 include: WIC (Women, Infants, and Children), Pediatric Health Clinics, Immunizations, Maternal and Infant, and Medical Prenatal Care.

Ms. Howlett told the Committee that the high Hispanic population of the county demands interpreters, which also raises the cost level for the health department. She mentioned that the families are often unaware of possible assistance, making public education very important. However, some families choose not to be involved in the system for various reasons. Finally, she noted that undocumented pregnant immigrant women are seen regularly to help provide the very best beginning for newborns and prevent expensive services later.

Rainbows United

Debbie Mai, Rainbows United in Wichita, presented information to the Committee on the Infant-Toddler (Tiny-K) program. Ms. Mai described the Tiny-K network, which provides services for children with or at-risk of developmental delays from birth to age three. Services available through Tiny-K are at no cost to eligible children and families. Each child is provided with an Individualized Family Service Plan. Parents, team members, and specialists work together to determine the best plan of care for the children. According to Ms. Mai, early intervention is critical for success, and collaboration with other agencies provides additional support for children and their families. At the close of last year, 2,947 children were being served, an increase of 7.2 percent over 2003. The total number of infants and toddlers served during fiscal year 2004 was 5,588. According to Ms. Mai, the U.S. Department of Education conducted evaluations nationwide, and Kansas has one of the premier early intervention systems in the nation. One in four children exit the system at age three because they no longer need special education services, thus enabling those children to enter the kindergarten experience with skills they need to succeed.

Child Abuse Prevention Services, Inc.

Carolee Jones, Saline County Smart Start, presented information to the Committee describing the performance measures for her program ([Attachment 31](#)). Ms. Jones noted that the need to have improvement in the quality of child care was the driving force behind the Smart Start program in Salina. Seventy-eight percent of the money received goes toward wage supplements or college scholarships for the T.E.A.C.H. program.

The Chairperson thanked each agency for their attendance and presentations. The next meeting is scheduled for October 12 and 13, 2005, pending approval by the LCC.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Prepared by Florence Deeter
Edited by Susan Kannarr

Approved by Committee on:

October 12, 2005
(date)